

The Builder.

No. CCKIV.

SATURDAY, MAY 29, 1847.



ARCHITECTURE may be well described as the monumental representation of history and civilization,—a reflect of the sentiments, manners, and religious belief, of the people practising it. The artistic feeling of antiquity, the religious spirit of the middle ages, and the "useful knowledge" of the present day, are exhibited in the structures of these various times as fully and indisputably as in written documents.

Amongst us, even at this moment, the Useful and the Beautiful are considered as two entirely distinct and separate matters. A small minority know better. They know full well that the greater includes the less; that what is beautiful must be useful: but in the minds of the majority, these properties have no connection, and are regarded as widely differing in importance. To the useful they will attend: with the beautiful they have no concern. The influence of the latter in the production of happiness is not yet fully seen. One of these days we shall all be better informed. Efforts are being made to effect a coalition between fine art and manufactures,—to increase the value of the useful, by adding the beautiful,—and can scarcely fail to succeed; but the progress is slow, and the results at present comparatively small.

When we compare the products of our industrial arts with those of the ancients, the difference which the comparison makes evident is surprising. Ancient industry identifies itself so completely with art, that it would be difficult to separate them. The most beautiful vases and the finest amphore are contemporaneous with the most admirable statues; and the best works of the secondary art were produced at the same period, during which the genius of Phidias and Praxiteles created the sublime works which will ever be our models. Modern industry, on the contrary, appears to stand aloof from art, which can best sustain and guide it: endeavouring to obtain an injurious freedom, it forgets the immutable laws of the beautiful. Until very lately it was not uncommon to see all styles of ornaments mixed together, without regard to fitness or chronology, and contrary to the laws of unity.

"The incontestable superiority of the ancients has its source in the principles which governed their works. The Greeks observed religiously the laws of the beautiful. And thus it followed, that a general character of fitness and elegance distinguishes the productions of the antique period."

The production of ugliness,—incongruity, inharmoniousness,—is little short of a crime against society; the neglect of an opportunity to set before the general eye that which is harmonious, fitting, beautiful, is only less so in degree. We would have taste displayed in every implement. A public building which is devoid of beauty, however completely it may serve the one object for which it was erected, does but half fulfil its purpose.

We have been led to these remarks by the feeling generally entertained and manifested in England; but more immediately by a visit to the baths and washhouses in Goulston-square,

Whitechapel, where a large sum of money (many thousands) has been spent without the slightest attempt at architectural effect. The building is apparently a sound and honest piece of construction, fitted up scientifically, with every convenience for washing and for bathing, except a plunging bath; but its appearance, both externally and internally, is not simply plain and unpretending, but downright ugly. Should any foreign architects go there, with their minds full of remembrances of the baths of the antique time (the rendezvous of men of letters, the galleries for sculpture and painting, the nurseries of taste), the fall will be a sudden one—the revulsion of feeling most complete; for certainly nothing more directly the reverse than this, the model establishment, can easily be conceived.

We do not make this a charge against the committee, but adduce it as an illustration, much to be regretted, of the feeling in which we have alluded.

To the value of the labours of this committee we have, on more than one occasion, borne honourable testimony; the importance of the movement they have aided cannot be overrated, and we would not willingly put ourselves in opposition to them. We had occasion in October last, when we described very fully the building as it then stood, to complain of the length of time that had been spent in obtaining it. This was in some measure explained and palliated by an accomplished member of their body,† and we unwillingly appear again in the light of an objector. Let us turn now therefore to that of which we can speak approvingly,—the general arrangement, the supply of water, the drying closet, and the regard that has been paid to the necessity for ventilation; of the efficiency of the provision in this latter respect, we shall have to speak when it has been tried.

For description of the building we must refer our readers to the former article, adding here some few particulars, of which we have now fuller information than we had then. The whole area covered is 130 feet long, by 21 feet wide, half of which is appropriated to the baths, and half to the washing department—these are kept perfectly distinct, and are entered one at the front, the other at the back of the building. There are 96 baths (our former account said more), and the same number of washing places, each enclosed by slate partitions, so that the washers are unseen by each other, and supplied with a boiling-tub, a washing-tub, and a drying-horse. The latter is pulled down, by the hand, out of a flat enclosure or closet—suspended over-head and kept heated by hot air; and when filled is pushed back into its receptacle, where its contents are speedily dried. To heat the irons for ironing, gas is employed.

Each bath is surrounded by slate partitions of a sufficient height, and covered in at the top with galvanized gauze. Turning the same handle, to points marked on a plate, supplies hot water, or cold water, or empties the bath, by means of a three-way cock. The baths are sunk in the ground, and are made of cast-iron, after various trials of other materials. A step is formed in the side of the bath, for the convenience of the user. The means of warming the towels is given by a simple arrangement. To Mr. Baly (under whose superintendence the whole has been executed), regarded as architect, our praise would be modified; but considered simply as engineer, we offer it without qualification.

Of the fire-proof nature of the building (consisting wholly of brick, iron, and slate),

and the ~~concrete~~ tank beneath, which holds 30,000 gallons, and is formed of brickwork in cement, tied together by iron rods, and lined with asphalt, ~~which is~~ elsewhere spoken. It only remains for us to say that the total cost, according to the engineer, will be about 12,000*l.*, and that the building will probably be ready for public inspection some time in the next month.*

We must express our earnest hope, that in any future "baths and washhouses," whether erected in our provincial towns or the metropolis, some attention will be paid to architectural character, and that in these and all other matters the *usefulness of the beautiful* will be remembered and acted on.

AWARDS OF OFFICIAL REFEREES.

CONTRACTED FOUNDATIONS.—IMPORTANT.

With regard to eleven fourth-rate buildings in Winchester-street, Clerkenwell, commenced by William Dennis, the district surveyor lodged an information to the effect, that the footings of the party and external walls were "on unbanked foundations, and not based on solid ground or other artificial foundation, to the depth of 3 inches below the surface of the ground."

At the survey and hearing which followed, the said William Dennis contended, that the ground having been banked up with concrete to the height of 9 inches above the surface under the footings, and to the extent of 9 inches on each side, a sufficient foundation was formed; and the ground having been opened, the official referees ascertained the extent of such banking up, and the materials with which such work had been done; and the said William Dennis admitted that the ground below was made ground to the depth of 4 feet, or thereabouts.

The award was,— "That the party walls and external walls of the several buildings referred to in the said information are not based on solid ground, or other sufficient foundation; and that the same are in that respect contrary to the first-mentioned Metropolitan Buildings Act; and we hereby direct the said William Dennis forthwith to ~~back down the said party walls and external walls~~; and inasmuch as the ground upon which the buildings in question are built is made ground, we hereby further direct, that such walls be rebuilt, on a sufficient foundation of concrete be formed in trenches within the ground under the footings of such walls, or otherwise, to the satisfaction of the district surveyor."

CUTTING CHASES IN PARTY-WALLS.

With regard to a party-wall separating Nos. 43 and 44, Green-street, Grosvenor-square, in the district of St. George's, Hanover-square, the owner was adding a story to No. 43, and for this purpose had raised the front and back walls; but the said party-wall being already of sufficient height, no further raising thereof was required. He proposed, however, to cut certain chases in the wall (shown by a plan to be five in number, and in no case deeper than 4½ inches to the centre of the wall) for the insertion of the brickwork of the jumbo, and of the whirles of the flue from two small chimney openings in the said additional story, but was prevented from so doing by his neighbour, the owner of the house No. 44, who required that such cutting into the said party-wall should have been signified to him by notice in writing three months previously to the commencement thereof; and threatened, that if the cutting should be begun without giving such notice, and before the expiration thereof, he would apply to the court for an injunction. The architects of the owner of 43 accordingly referred the matter to the official referees, and requested them to determine whether, if the said chases were cut in all respects conformably with the rule headed "Recesses and chases," in schedule D, part III., any previous notice of the roof was by the provision of the said Act required to be given.

The referees determined,— "That inasmuch as the proposed operation is a work incident to the connection of the party-wall with the premises adjoining, if the consent of the adjoining owner be not obtained, notice of such work must be given by the building owner to the ad-

* Translations de la Société des Beaux-Arts. M. Gilmard.

† See Vol. IV., p. 65.

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* The owner tendered, as originally stated, the sum of 12,000*l.*. How great alterations must have been made.